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25 January 1965

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
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*South Vietnam: [Military and Buddhist intrigues for power are evident behind the continuing wave of Buddhist demonstrations]

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[General Khanh and the military fear that Premier Huong's inflexibility toward the Buddhists will lead to his downfall and replacement by anti-American elements seeking to negotiate with the Viet Cong. On 24 January, Khanh told Deputy Ambassador Johnson that these fears had been conveyed to Huong and Chief of State Suu, who offered to resign and hand over power to the military. Khanh claimed the Buddhists had already agreed to support an army takeover, but one officer reportedly told Suu that the military had reconsidered their position.]

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[Premier Huong denies that he has offered to resign. He charges that the military are exaggerating the Buddhists' strength in order to maneuver Khanh into power with Buddhist backing. He claims this could lead to a proneutralist government.]

[Khanh's maneuvering is reported to have aroused considerable opposition within the military with some officers expressing the view that both Khanh and Air Force chief Ky should be removed from the scene.]

[Huong believes that the Buddhist Institute has little popular backing, and that, if the military cooperate, he can use strong measures to deal with Buddhist troublemakers. Huong has again publicly

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accused the Buddhists of lending themselves to Communist purposes.]

[Although there continue to be signs of rivalry between Buddhist leaders Tri Quang and Tam Chau, both evidently expect their hunger strike, now in its sixth day, to lead to a military coup. Chau has long been reported in contact with General Khanh, but Quang is said to feel that the Buddhists can more easily influence the "Young Turk" generals, who he thinks lack any clear political ideology.]

[Buddhist anti-American agitation so far seems intended to force the US to abandon support for Huong, but recent references in Buddhist propaganda to the need for peace may be more ominous. One of Tri Quang's followers recently told the US Embassy that, although they knew Buddhism would be crushed under Communist rule, the Buddhists saw no point in continued killing on behalf of selfish generals and of a regime that oppressed them.]

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France - West Germany: [Chancellor Erhard says he feels there has been a marked change in De Gaulle's attitude toward major issues in French-German relations.]

[In briefing Ambassador McGhee on the Rambouillet talks, Erhard said he felt that the most striking evidence of change in De Gaulle's thinking was the latter's assent to having French Foreign Minister Couve de Murville join German Foreign Minister Gerhard Schroeder in inviting the foreign ministers of the other four EEC countries to prepare for a meeting of prime ministers on the question of European unity.]

[On the subject of German reunification, De Gaulle had finally agreed, according to Erhard, that a "very favorable declaration" should be made. De Gaulle did not undertake to support any precise form of a proposal for an initiative toward reunification. He agreed, however, to further meetings among the US, UK, France, and Germany to discuss the German proposal for a four-power council, comprising the US, UK, France, and the USSR.]

[Erhard said that during the discussions of European defense, De Gaulle showed no hostility toward the US, whose strength he conceded is basic for the defense of the West. However, De Gaulle still believed NATO must be changed and a decision made as to when nuclear weapons should be used. Regarding German participation in the MLF, Erhard said De Gaulle merely questioned whether Germany would be wise to join nuclear organizations in view of the suspicions of German intentions still existing in Eastern Europe.]

[Erhard believed it was significant that De Gaulle did not say he would "have nothing more to do with us" if Germany joined the MLF. He also thought that in the

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last analysis De Gaulle would "put up with the MLF" to counter the Soviet medium range ballistic missiles facing Western Europe.

There have been no other indications of any change in De Gaulle's view that the MLF has no place in his concept of a politically unified Europe based on a unified European defense.

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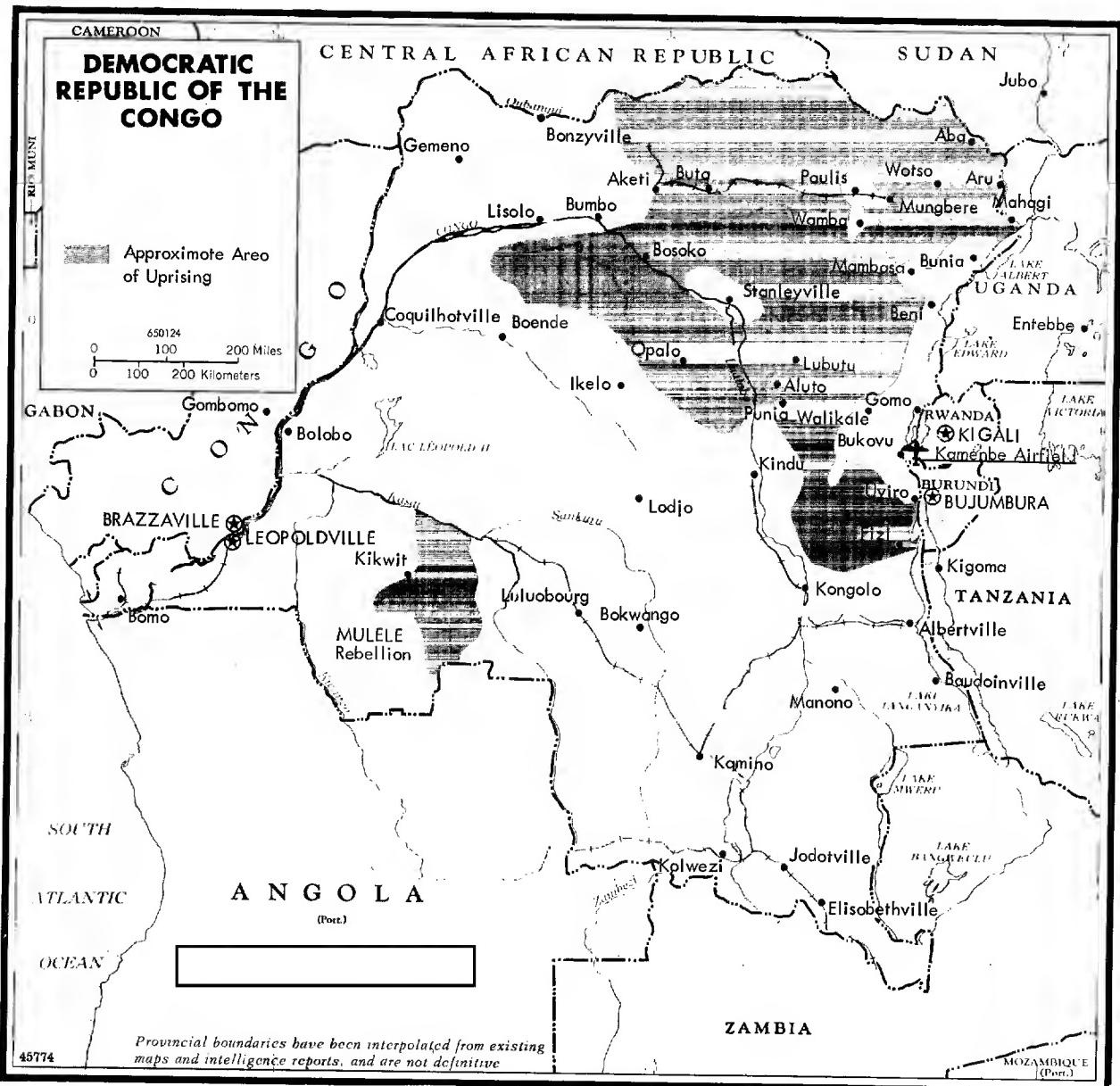
UK: [The US Embassy believes that the two by-election reverses on 21 January demonstrate that the Wilson government has not yet established itself in the public's confidence.]

[The government will watch closely the results of three by-elections which will be held on 4 February in "safe" Conservative constituencies. Labor is not expected to stage any upsets, but a good showing would indicate that the results last week were temporary aberrations which do not reflect serious disenchantment with the Labor government.]

[In the meantime, with its Commons majority reduced to three, Labor will be increasingly dependent on the support of the Liberal parliamentary delegation. The Liberals have consistently opposed such controversial Labor programs as steel renationalization. Although Wilson has indicated he intends to press on with his legislative program, he will have to proceed with caution on policies which might arouse Liberal opposition or dissent within his own party.]

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Congo: Rebel activity in the western Congo may be increasing.

On 23 January, a rebel band, presumably from the Gamboma training base in Congo (Brazzaville), established a beachhead on the east bank of the Congo River near Bolobo. Similar raids were repulsed in late July and again last week, and government troops are reported to be moving successfully against the rebels in this instance.

[Activity at Gamboma intensified this month after a curtailment in late 1964. The aim of this activity reportedly is the opening of a "second front" at Bolobo.] The rebels may hope to relieve pressure on the north-eastern Congo, where government forces plan to renew the offensive.

Rebels in Kwilu Province have rebuilt a missionary airstrip. Trenches dug earlier by the rebels have been filled in and the runway has been extended. The "Mulele rebellion" in the Kwilu region has long been handicapped by lack of arms in quantity. An airlift to this region could probably come from Congo (Brazzaville) without Leopoldville's detecting it.

In the eastern Congo, government troops destroying a large rebel camp reportedly have captured a 120mm. mortar, as well as chemicals--apparently for making Molotov cocktails--in drums marked "Tanganyika." Although there have been numerous reports of arms moving from Tanzania, this would be, if confirmed, the first solid evidence of the use of Soviet-manufactured equipment in this area. On 30 October, a Soviet vessel unloaded six 120mm. mortars at Dar es Salaam.

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USSR: The USSR, reversing another Khrushchev policy, is now encouraging construction of private houses. On 17 January, Izvestia reported that the bank responsible for financing such construction had criticized three Union Republics which refused to allocate land for this purpose, and that the bank is offering credit to individuals for private housing and is granting loans for repair work. Under the original Seven Year Plan (1959-1965), about one third of the urban housing built in 1965 was to be private. Since 1960, however, the regime has sanctioned only a limited loan program, and private construction, which was 33 percent of urban housing built in 1958-60, dropped to 19 percent in 1964.

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*Syria: The strike by merchants in Damascus yesterday is a defiant protest against the Baathist military regime's recent nationalization measures. A government decree that such activity "contrary to the application of socialism" can be punished by life imprisonment or death had forestalled plans for a similar demonstration two weeks ago. Although security forces have arrested a large number of the strikers and apparently are in control of the situation, the Damascus strike is likely to encourage similar anti-regime demonstrations by conservative elements in other major cities.

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